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ABSTRACT

The Rainbow Visibility Project has the primary goal of raising awareness to sexual orientation as a diversity issue at the University of San Diego (USD) (California), a Roman Catholic liberal arts university. It was designed to be consistent with other efforts supporting the cultural competence at the university, whose mission statement explicitly advocates the "recognition of the dignity of each individual." However, gay and lesbian students, staff, and faculty expressed incongruity between the university's stated mission and goals and their experiences of invisibility and, when visible, harassment. The Rainbow Educator Program (REP) was one of five components of the project, the only component continued after 2001 and funded by the university. The goals of the REP are to: (1) nurture effective and comfortable interactions among members of the USD community on topics related to sexual orientation and other diversity issues; (2) provide accurate, up-to-date, information on sexual orientation; (3) dispel homophobic stereotypes; and (4) address issues impacting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community on campus. To accomplish these goals the Rainbow Educators (REs), a small group (between 12 and 18) of graduate and undergraduate students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni/ae, engage the campus community on sexual orientation and other diversity issues through a variety of educational avenues. This paper describes a model for sexual orientation education at a religiously affiliated university that respects the religious character and mission of the university and also promotes an atmosphere of respect for sexual orientation. The paper hypothesizes that the REP is an essential component of creating an ethical school and argues that the REP has had a transformative impact on the campus climate at USD. It offers suggestions on how the REP can be adapted for other religiously-affiliated institutions. (Contains 36 references.) (BT)

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QUEERING THE ETHICAL SCHOOL: A MODEL FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION EDUCATION AT A RELIGIOUSLY-AFFILIATED INSTITUTION

ED 479 167

Paper presented at the 84th Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
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Introduction

"A fag with AIDS killed my friend" was scrawled in the men's room of the law library.

The anonymous caller said he knew where Angie lived on campus and threatened to kill her for being a "filthy dyke."*

Shane discovered "God Hates Fags" written in indelible marker on his dorm room door. Inside the room was trashed, with clothes, shoes, books, and papers torn and strewn all over the floor.

When Mike came out, his roommate was so upset that Mike had to move to a single room on campus. He was harassed to the point that campus security accompanied him to class, the dining hall, and his dorm.

*names have been changed

In response to these and other incidents, the $32,000 Rainbow Visibility project was funded by the Irvine Foundation from 1999-2001 with the primary goal of raising awareness to sexual orientation as a diversity issue at the University of San Diego, a Roman Catholic liberal arts university in San Diego, CA (Gloria, Vowles, *et al.*, 1998). Staff, faculty, and students designed the Rainbow Visibility project to be consistent with other efforts supporting cultural competence at the university, whose mission statement explicitly advocates the "recognition of the dignity of each individual"(Mitchell & Baron, 1998, USD Mission Statement). However, gay and lesbian students, staff, and faculty expressed incongruity between the university's stated mission and goals and their experiences of invisibility and, when visible, harassment.

The Rainbow Educator Program (REP) was one of five components of the Rainbow Visibility project, the only component continued after 2001 and funded by the university. The goals of the REP are 1) to nurture effective and comfortable interactions between members of the USD community on topics related to sexual orientation and other diversity issues; 2) to provide accurate, up-to-date information on sexual orientation; 3) to dispel homophobic stereotypes; and 4) to address issues impacting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) community on campus (RE Executive Board, 2001). To accomplish these goals, the Rainbow Educators (RE's)

are a small group (between twelve and eighteen) of undergraduate and graduate students, staff, faculty, administrators and alumni/ae who engage the campus community on sexual orientation and other diversity issues through a variety of educational avenues. Some RE's are lesbian, gay, or bisexual; most are not.

RE's receive forty-five hours of training, which includes participation in a weekend retreat on multicultural awareness. Training focuses on three areas: 1) LGBT history, culture, and contemporary issues; 2) skill-building in interpersonal communication, public speaking, and group dynamics; and 3) team-building within the group (RE Executive Board, 2001). Each RE receives a binder of information on these areas. Since USD is a Catholic university, training places a special emphasis on religious issues related to sexual orientation. In addition, the RE's meet monthly to plan upcoming presentations, debrief past ones, and address questions and/or conflicts as they arise. The program is administered by a staff member in the Office of Student Affairs in conjunction with a Management Team whose members have been RE's for at least one year.

During the first three years of the program, RE's conducted workshops with over fifty campus groups, including classes in psychology, theology, communication studies, leadership studies, sociology, and business; sororities and fraternities; counseling center, residence hall, and student affairs staffs; peer educators; social issues conference; and the women's center (RE Executive Board, 2001). Presentations are interactive and dynamic; they include films, role-plays, visualizations, personal stories, and questions/answers. Based on available data, 1000-1200 students, staff, and faculty (on a campus of 6600) have attended an RE presentation since 1999.

Purpose

Our aim in this paper is to describe a model for sexual orientation education at a

religiously affiliated university that both respects the religious character and mission of the university and at the same time promotes an atmosphere of respect for diversity of sexual orientation. We hypothesize that the REP is an essential component of creating an ethical school that embraces diversity, promotes justice and caring, and engages in self-critique. Moreover, we argue that the REP has had a transformative impact on the campus climate at the University of San Diego. Finally, we offer suggestions how the REP can be adapted for other religiously-affiliated institutions.

Methods of inquiry

This qualitative, exploratory study investigated the impact of the Rainbow Educator Program on the campus community, both inside and outside the classroom. Our primary method of inquiry consisted of extensive interviews in spring 2001 with the twenty Rainbow Educators from the first two years of the program. Included in the group were faculty, administrators, undergraduate and graduate students, and one alumnus who were male, female, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, African American, Anglo, Latino/a, Asian, Filipino, and physically challenged. The RE's were asked a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit their experiences of campus and classroom climates before, during, and after the initiation of the REP. Interviews lasted approximately an hour; each was taped and later transcribed, coded, and analyzed. All names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants.

Supplementing interview data were anonymous evaluations by attendees at RE presentations, data on incidents of harassment and bias against the LGBT community reported to campus public safety officers, and changes in university policy regarding sexual orientation implemented during the study.

The Rainbow Educators were selected as the primary source of data due to their interest in sexual orientation issues, sensitivity to changes in campus climate, and experiences on the front lines of those changes. However, it is important to note that they were by no means an unbiased group. Most were motivated to apply for the program because they felt the campus was inhospitable to the LGBT community and wanted to see changes in the climate.

Moreover, we as researchers were likewise not unbiased; we were participants in the program as well as observers. We were administrators of the Rainbow Visibility Project and members of the executive board of the REP from 1999-2001. As an administrator and faculty member in two different schools with twenty years of experience between us, we understand USD's history and contemporary context in ways impossible for outside observers. We are committed to the fulfillment of USD's mission both professionally and personally. We had and continue to have a stake in USD becoming more inclusive of its LGBT community. As a result, we participated in creating our data to a greater degree than many researchers (Tierney, 2000).

Our investment in USD and the REP provided advantages and disadvantages in our research. Our ongoing relationships with the RE's enabled greater trust and honesty in interviews. We knew them personally and encouraged their frank responses to our questions. Interviews included shared memories, tears, and laughter. However, we recognize that some RE's may have hesitated to criticize the program due to our leadership in it. And since we want to encourage the program and to foster a more ethical university, we may tend toward excessive praise or criticism of USD and the REP. In short, we have blind spots.

To capitalize on our strengths as participant observers and minimize liabilities, we draw on the work of Tierney and Ellis and Bochner on the potential and peril of reflexivity and

autocthnography (Tierney, 2000; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Recognizing with Tierney the "inevitable tension between fact and myth," we seek to "decolonize [our] subjects by way of the construction and presentation of the narrative" (2000, 539). Along with Ellis and Bochner, we hope to "[*connect*] *the personal to the cultural*," privileging "*relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically* revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language" (2000, 739, italics in text).

Theoretical framework

Our analysis in this paper is shaped primarily by Robert Starratt's work into what constitutes an ethical school by Robert Starratt (1991, 1994, 1996). We employ Starratt for our interpretive framework rather than a more familiar framework of liberative education such as Paulo Freire for three reasons. First, although Starratt's work focuses on K-12 education, we believe his model for an ethical school works just as effectively for post-secondary education, especially at a religiously-affiliated university. Having worked at Boston College and Fordham University, Starratt is well-acquainted with the particular issues faced by Roman Catholic higher education. Second and more important, much of his research has focused on the need for schools to promote moral excellence, a value explicitly shared by USD. Third, since homosexuality is often framed as an moral issue, Starratt's model is appropriate. By using this framework, we assert that education about sexual orientation is part of developing an ethical school.

To summarize Starratt's arguments, he first asserts that learning is a moral endeavor. A school "promotes a moral way of being" whether consciously or not (1996, 156). He then identifies two objectives for moral education: 1) defining human qualities that are implicitly moral and 2) creating frameworks for moral responsibility and action (1996, 156-7). The three

human qualities foundational for moral life are autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence. Autonomy is taking responsibility for oneself, while connectedness means accepting the responsibility inherent in relationship, and transcendence is striving toward something greater than self-interest in the common good (1996, 156-160). Recognizing the diversity of how the three are manifested, Starratt asserts these are not virtues to be acquired but qualities achieved only through conscious action. The ethical school aims to develop these moral qualities not only in students, but throughout the entire community.

To nurture these qualities through action, he argues for a "multidimensional ethical framework," an equilateral triangle of critique, justice, and care (1994, ch. 4). The ethics of critique asks "Who controls? What legitimates? Who defines?"(1994, 56). It challenges the status quo, examining power, privilege, and decision-making processes. It encourages questioning an institution's values, its frameworks, the ways life is organized by and for its members. Second, the ethics of justice asks, "How shall we govern ourselves?"(1994, 56). It stresses equity, impartiality, emotional and physical security, equality of access to resources, and fairness in relation to both individuals and the community. It also supports advocacy for these goals. Finally, the ethics of caring asks, "What do our relationships ask of us?" (1994, 56). It emphasizes dignity, empowerment, dialogue, and mutuality in decision-making. It focuses attention on the quality of relationships, on loyalty and faithfulness to others, on love. It means that the "school as an organization should hold the good of human beings within it as sacred" (1996, 163).

According to Starratt, to build an ethical school, educators must constantly engage, negotiate, and manage the three sides of this triangle. The ethical challenge of critique is to make

educational structures more responsive to the rights of its members. To be just, a school must engage in an ethics of critique of arrangements that work against human rights. The ethics of caring mediates conflicts between competing claims for justice. The three ethics cannot stand apart from one another. Critique needs caring to avoid cynicism, while caring must attend to structures of power so as not to play favorites. Justice must be committed to the dignity of the individual through caring, while it needs critique to perceive bias and not presume universality (1996, 164).

Starratt acknowledges that for students, faculty, and administrators to struggle toward creating an ethical school is difficult; it involves conflict, tension, and multiple ambiguities. Yet not to engage this struggle implies that morality is irrelevant to the community's life. In what follows, we test the utility of Starratt's "multidimensional ethical" triangle by analyzing the impact of the Rainbow Educator Program at USD. We explore how the REP may enable a religiously-affiliated institution to become a more ethical one.

Findings

We have organized our findings according to the three legs of Starratt's triangle, beginning as he does with critique, followed by justice and caring.

Critique

As noted in the introduction, the initial impetus for the REP was critique of USD's prevailing climate for its LGBT community. The majority of RE's strongly criticized the pre-REP environment, describing it as "segregated," "closeted," "underground," "hush-hush," "closed-minded," "environment of hostility,"and "culture of silence." Bill, a graduate student, remarked, "USD doesn't even recognize that gay people exist in their community I think. Like, it's more of a,

well, they're elsewhere; they're not here." Added Harry, another graduate student, "So if it's talked about, it's talked about in a very degrading and sort of made fun of way. And in terms of academically, I don't think it was ever talked about." A third graduate student, William, who is gay, provided the most thorough survey of the landscape:

> I think that there are those who are open-minded and tolerant. They're probably a minority. Then the majority would probably be–I would say apathetic. At least casually understanding, non judgmental–overtly–[they] would state that they don't care one way or the other or "just let 'em be." Of course the ones who we are much more familiar with are the active homophobes, which make up far too many people, currently, because we're one of the groups that it's still okay to target. And we would not tolerate a group of students talking about niggers [sic] or wetbacks [sic] or any other minority group in a-such a derogatory manner. Yet we hear students casually discussing faggots [sic] and numerous other euphemisms among themselves, and they don't give it a second thought who's around, who might be listening, what the consequences may be. And all too often, this is also coming from adults and authority figures and a few teachers. It's a terrible, shocking state of affairs. Just insert any other derogatory word for "faggot" and ask yourself if this is a problem.

The prevailing attitude at USD does not differ from the climate at many universities, particularly Catholic and other religiously affiliated schools (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Levine & Love, 2000; Litton, 2001; Love, 1998; McNaron, 1997). Likewise, most RE's attributed USD's climate to the Roman Catholic affiliation of the university and misunderstanding Catholic views of homosexuality. Despite Catholic teachings on tolerance, many in the community and outside of it believe the Church unconditionally condemns homosexuality (Gramick & Furey, 1988; Jordan, 2000; Levine & Love, 2000). Alumna Kathy explained, "I hear oftentimes that their defense is that it's in the name of religion. Catholicism. And I just don't know where they get the authority to judge so harshly and to close their hearts and to close their minds, especially on this campus. They're shutting off an opportunity for Catholics–in some cases, Catholics–to get an education at a Catholic school." Amy, a faculty member, amplified, "So the USD community perceives the LGBT community as being deviant, immoral, and I think they're scared and they

don't want their authority to be undermined–the Catholic authority–to be undermined." "And I think that's what the USD community always wanted," added Harry, "just not rock the boat, stay the status quo, that we have to maintain our integrity as our institution–Catholic institution."

By becoming RE's, these individuals decided to rock the boat. Their participation in the REP was a critique of the university's power structures and decision-making processes that they believed deprived a specific group of its human rights within the community. Deona, an undergraduate, explained, "One of the other reasons I got involved with the Rainbow Educators was because of the Hate Crimes Initiative that I got involved in through the United Front [USD's multicultural center]. And I found out through that, that the majority of the people who were being targeted on this campus for hate crimes were the gay community." Carol, another undergraduate, specified one kind of hate crime, even if unintentional and unconscious: "I think people use a lot of hate language, that they don't even realize that they're using. Like saying, 'that's gay,' 'you look like a fag.' And I'm not really sure that all these people are actually homophobic. I think that if they were informed, they wouldn't be, but I think that homophobia comes from not knowing." Carol then noted the Catholic Church's stand on tolerance and stressed the important role the RE's play in re-educating the campus community:

> Because I think that people sometimes act in hateful ways toward LGBT people, supporting their actions, their views with the church using their Catholicity to defend hate, which is inconsistent. … Hate, I think, is rooted in ignorance. And by informing the largely ignorant USD community, I think the RE's should be talking about the truth of what–especially what the Catholic Church has to say (See "Always Our Children," 1997; "Letter to the Bishops," 1986; "Ministry with Gay & Lesbian Catholics," n.d.).

Using their critique as motivation, the RE's sought to be truth-tellers, agents of change, to move USD toward greater embodiment of its mission as a values-oriented institution, that is, an ethical school.

Justice

Consonant with the climate described above, prior to the REP, USD's LGBT community experienced a sense of injustice, fears for physical and job security, and unequal access to campus resources. Before 1999 only one faculty member was out in the College of Arts and Sciences, the largest unit of the university, and he did not reveal his sexual orientation until after receiving tenure. Rumors circulated that staff members who disclosed that they were gay had been fired, which discouraged other employees from coming out. The only students publicly identified as gay were those serving as president of the undergraduate LGBT organization (established in 1991 as Student Alliance Embracing Sexual Orientation [SAESO], renamed PRIDE in 1997). Only courageous, confident students (who usually lived off-campus) were willing to accept the office because of the harassment it involved. SAESO/PRIDE met at an undisclosed location; to attend meetings, students had to call a campus extension and receive a call back (after being vetted) with the location. Meetings were confidential to the point where members did not greet each other on campus for fear of outing one other.

The climate was somewhat more accepting at the Law School, in which several staff and students had been out for years. The law school added sexual orientation to its non-discrimination policy in 1996. Yet for undergraduates and those working with them, "don't ask, don't tell" was the unstated policy. Discussing sexual orientation in a non-joking, non-homophobic manner invited suspicion and speculation about the speaker's orientation. To many students, anyone mentioning LGBT issues was coming out.

While claiming neither a causal relationship for changes on campus nor all the credit, we argue that the REP has contributed to an increase in awareness of inequity and movement in the direction of greater justice toward the LGBT community. It does not seem coincidental that a

number of students, staff, and faculty have come out (or at least no longer pretended they were heterosexual) in the two years of the REP. Linda, a faculty member, reported, "the exposure has been very positive. I've had more students coming out to me. I had a-candidate [for a faculty position] come out to me."

As a result of their involvement in the program, the RE's likewise reported becoming more vocal "coming out" as LGBT or as heterosexual allies. They felt more comfortable with their own sexual orientation and talked about sexual orientation without fear (or caring) that they would be assumed to be gay (Getz & Kirkley, 2003). Audiences at presentations usually assumed all RE's were gay; it was a significant learning experience for the campus community to realize that it was not necessary to be LGBT to want to stop homophobia. Heterosexual RE's became more aware of their privilege, while gay RE's felt liberated to be honest. Parker, a gay graduate student, commented, "We have a chance to say what's on our mind, to share our experience. And the fact that we're allowed to do this at USD means a lot to us, I think. I don't think, I know. It does mean a lot to us. It makes us feel much less like second-class citizens here at USD. That's very important." And John, a gay undergraduate, declared, "Rainbow Educators and USD have really come together and have really built a safe, comfortable environment that doesn't tolerate any hate, that makes other students feel like comfortable with who they are."

Campus conversation even changed to reflect increased safety and comfort. RE's reported greater sensitivity to homophobic speech on campus, and they perceived a decline in casual homophobic comments in and out of the classroom. Fag and dyke jokes and slurs seemed less common. William commented, "if we reach one person who would casually toss phrases around, or grow up expecting a stereotype and god, I know so many of them because I was in the closet, I was amongst them." Deona recalled a memorable incident after hearing a male student say, "that's

so gay":

> I've seen just little things, like what I was saying before about, you know, a student correcting another student. And I knew she had been to a presentation. . . . So to see her correct somebody–and it was–and it was especially interesting 'cause it was in the multicultural center and it a person of Latino descent and it was a woman to a man. So, to me, that blew me away. Totally. Because, you know, the whole machismo culture of Latinos is–you know, a woman doesn't tell a man what to do. A woman doesn't correct a man. And my–when she first corrected him I assumed that he was going to, you know, say, "Oh, whatever." Make a joke on it or tell her to be quiet or whatever. But he didn't. He respected her enough that he was okay with her correcting him and he apologized for what he said. And that was huge, 'cause I had been at the presentation that she was at.

Another change is that PRIDE no longer meets in secret, but advertises its meetings and has a website. It sponsors programs, brings speakers to campus, receives budget allocations, and has a seat on the student senate. Members are more open (although still cautious) about revealing their involvement in the club; non-member students, faculty, and staff often attend PRIDE programs. Undergraduate student Marsha observed, "we've been getting a little more participation in our PRIDE group. . . . I'm feeling things are getting a little more comfortable. Maybe I'm just naive. But I feel things are getting a little bit better. And we're making ourselves a little more visible. And when I say 'we,' I mean PRIDE and its supporters." PRIDE has become (virtually) like any other club.

In short, the REP has nurtured a more just environment, in which there is less risk to coming out, a decline in biased speech, and increased access to campus resources. John summed it up this way:

> And I think this program brings an awareness to the university campus that they're–homosexuality does exist. . . . I think back before, the organization known as PRIDE . . . was very hush-hush and it was very underground. And now it's out there. You walk into the United Front [multicultural center] and you just see it, not advertising but, National Coming Out Day. They're out there. And I think Rainbow Educators have built that. Starting to build a comfort zone, talking about sexuality.

<u>Caring</u>

Starratt emphasizes the ethic of caring as the final and in some ways most important leg of the triangle; without it, critique and justice can become rigid and ideological. Attendance to the quality of human relationships is a critical part of becoming an ethical school. The REP manifested caring on two levels. First, RE's frequently mentioned relationships with other RE's as a primary benefit of the program. Amy, a faculty member, commented, "I expect to benefit enormously by working as a team with these people who want to create change on a campus that seems to really not want to change. And I think it's a powerful experience. And so I will grow personally from that. I also benefit a lot from hearing the stories of gay and lesbian students on our campus, both those who are RE's and aren't, but whom I've met through the RE's." Others stressed the diversity of the group, specifically across status lines within the university, as enhancing the quality of their relationships. Deona put it succinctly: "I was really impressed because there were administrators in the group and there were faculty in the group. And for me to be in the same group, we're all on the same level, I mean it was like, whoa!" Harry, an administrator as well as a graduate student, also noted this benefit:

> Each of us brings such a different life experience and a different, area of knowledge and wisdom and experience that I think it really adds a lot to the presentations. I love the fact that the Rainbow Educators are such a diverse group, in terms of talking about having faculty, having grad students, having law students and having, you know, alumni and undergraduates all working together. I think that adds an amazing amount to the program. I think people really are aware and do have respect for where others are coming from in their lives, whether they're students or grads or, teachers. And, like I say, I think that's one of the best parts about the program, is that it is such a diverse group, in terms of where you're coming from and who you're speaking to.

Moreover, Parker identified the bond holding this diverse group together:

> We came from the classroom, from one side of the classroom as students, or the other side as teachers. And administrators. We came from different religious backgrounds. Some people had no formal religious backgrounds. We came from different places in terms of sexual orientation and also different places along for those people who were in a process of coming out - - different degrees of that, different stages of that in terms of where people were

> at on that. The diversity of the group was an enormous asset. We had earnestness about us; we weren't really experts, any one of us in this field. We just all cared about the field.

Beyond the ethics of caring RE's experienced with one another, the REP has enabled sexual orientation to become a visible and legitimate topic of conversation on campus. Starratt identifies conversation as a hallmark of the ethics of caring: people talk about what they care about. This second level of caring, stimulating open dialogue about sexuality, was the most significant impact of the REP on campus climate. The RE's challenged the taboo against speaking the words "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual" openly on campus. They broke the silence and made sexual orientation an issue important enough to discuss. Emily, a faculty member, examined the changes she noticed in her own classroom:

> And some things that we read about in some of my classes would bring sort of snickers, or, you know, that kind of response. And I've been thinking about this because I've been working on my assessment of the course revision that I did last term. And looking back through a lot of the things that students wrote in exams. And in the past semester I had none of that reaction. Maybe because, having announced up front that the readings were going to be about love between men and women, between women, between men. But they, you know, the snicker response was not one that they were going to even try.

William explained how he saw the process, "exposure is the first step. It's simply saying, you know, here's a little bit of information whether you want it or not. What you do with it is up to you. But until you can be informed a bit, you're going to be carrying these stereotypes around." Remarked Marsha, "I think that, also, a lot of the straight people here actually have open minds. They just need people to engage with and–and actually say that they know a gay person." Deona asked rhetorically, "we have people that come up to us and thank us for having these discussions. What else do you need as evidence to say this needs to be happening more?"

RE's perceived this willingness to dialogue as transforming the campus. Harry remarked, "And I think the RE's kind of helped change [campus climate] a little bit because all of a sudden

there was this group that was talking about it. . . . So I think the USD community has changed to the sense that it's more of a sense of acceptance that this is something that goes–that is an issue here and needs to be addressed." Emily echoed Harry:

> But I think it [campus climate] has to have changed, if only due to the fact that we're talking about these things now. And people who are in no way involved in any part of this Rainbow Visibility project are also talking about it. I guess, again, I would think about just things students have said in my class. That there seems to be more comfort, more ease–I mean, not just in their attitudes toward it, but just readiness to–to talk about these kinds of issues.

Again, in the two years of the program, it has become more commonplace for faculty to include discussions of sexual orientation and the LGBT community in courses where appropriate. A course entitled "Sociology of Sexual Orientation" has been added to the regular curriculum in the College of Arts & Sciences, the first regularly offered course focusing on sexual orientation. RE presentations have become regular parts of the training program for peer counselors, orientation advisors, resident assistants, and graduate assistants in Student Affairs. After RE's distributed pink triangles proclaiming an "Open Zone" for discussion of issues related to sexual orientation, they appeared on a number of office doors on campus. Undergraduate student John commented,

> People are actually able to find out, whether they try to understand or not. But we're able to talk about it. And I think that's–being part–Rainbow Educators, they think it's a good program because it enables not only the program, and the facilitators but staff, professors, graduate students to talk about it. Where before there was–I don't think there was ever any dialogue about it.

Discussion

Based on our findings, we conclude that the Rainbow Educator Program is a critical aid in fostering a more ethical, religiously-affiliated university. The REP's critique of existing structures, advocacy of justice for those who come out, and support for honest dialogue through caring relationships embodies Starratt's "multidimensional ethical framework" for action. The

evidence for this conclusion is a more open campus climate where authentic conversations on sexual orientation are not avoided, but engaged. Moreover, we believe the REP understood in the context of Starratt's equilateral triangle can serve as a model for furthering respect toward the religious mission of the university; understanding the range of theological attitudes toward homosexuality, including the stance of the tradition to which the school is affiliated; dispelling homophobia and stereotypes; and promoting understanding and respect for homosexuals, heterosexuals, bisexuals, and the transgendered.

Following Starratt, we argue that this model is revolutionary because it asserts that struggling openly and honestly with the issue of sexual orientation is a moral endeavor. Rather than avoiding engagement due to assumptions that homo- or bisexuality are immoral, sinful, or aberrant (and that to engage the issue signifies endorsement or approval), this model counters that discussion is critical to moral education and excellence precisely because of disagreement and conflict. Dialogue about sexual orientation is essential to moral excellence because it encourages autonomy, connectedness, and transcendence. It advocates respect without requiring unanimity of conviction, yet it demands that conversation partners be informed, speak from the heart, and take responsibility for their own beliefs and actions. It supports listening without judgement and speaking earnestly without preaching. Through this process of dialogue, it is possible for barriers between humans to fall away and the sacred ground between them to be touched.

This lofty potential stated, this study raises questions about the feasibility of the REP as an educational model in the real world. Based on our research, it is clear that the success of the REP carries a price tag. Despite (or perhaps because of) greater openness to dialogue and willingness

of some to come out, harassment and bias-related incidents continue to occur, especially in certain segments of the university community. For example, gay and lesbian athletes continue to feel extremely unsafe coming out. At the same time, some in the community feel that the issue has been beat into the ground, that no diversity issue *except* homosexuality is ever discussed. They feel the "problem" of sexual orientation is now "solved" at the university, and no further attention is needed. Currently, the future of the REP is in doubt, despite (or because of) university funding. The energy and commitment of the original team has dissipated as members have graduated. No member of the administration has emerged to support the program with enthusiasm. The Rainbow Educator Program has arrived at a critical point of institutionalization: will it be truly owned by the university or will it depend on the vacillating energies of committed participants?

Research that considers LGBT issues at religiously-affiliated institutions (RAI's) is scarce (Levine & Love, 2000; Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Lipkin, 1999; Love, 1998). In noting this paucity, Levine and Love (2000) identify barriers unique to RAI's: "the invisibility of the issue of sexual orientation, the lack of a visible community of LGB people, an institutional culture that avoids conflict, the way in which institutions approach issues of sexuality, the negative messages coming from the sponsoring religious organization, and tacitly approved homophobia" (90). These factors must be considered by those who want to start programs similar to the REP. For those who want to adapt this model at their own RAI's, we offer the following "keys to success," based on our research and our experiences as participant-observers, framed once again as the three legs of the triangle.

Critique

A key aspect of the REP's effectiveness has been its balance of respect and critique of USD's mission statement and Roman Catholic teachings on sexuality. This balance has enabled the program to gain credibility within the university community and be synchronous with USD's goals to search for truth and engage in self-reflection. As noted in the introduction, a founding rationale of the REP was the mission statement's commitment to the "recognition of the dignity of each individual." Moreover, the REP embodies a second element of USD's mission: "The University welcomes and respects those whose lives are formed by different traditions, recognizing their important contributions to our pluralistic society and to an atmosphere of open discussion essential to liberal education"(USD Mission Statement).

The REP honors the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality and communicates them accurately, often correcting the misunderstanding that the church unequivocally condemns homosexuals (Gramick & Furey, 1988; "Letter to the Bishops," 1986; "Ministry with Gay & Lesbian Catholics," n.d.; "Always Our Children," 1997). Biblical sexual ethics are discussed as well. Although some RE's agree with Church teachings and others disagree, they always present them clearly and compassionately. RE's understand their mission to be calling the university to be true to its mission statement and to Church teachings on tolerance, forbearance, and love. They offer critiques when they perceive USD failing to live up to those standards. Graduate student Parker commented, "the best [universities] that are comfortable with being the best know that they sometimes need to self-assess and look at themselves to make sure that they're delivering what they say they will in their missions, to everybody on campus. Everybody's entitled to get that."

Justice

At each step of planning and implementing the REP, the original grant committee and later management team worked closely with university officials to ensure the program was administered

fairly and impartially, with adequate access to campus resources. Before the program started, several conversations occurred between REP administrators, the Provost, and Assistant Provost. REP leaders wanted to ensure the university would support the program without bias, while university officials wanted assurance that the goals of the REP were consonant with the university's mission and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Both sides needed to know they would be treated fairly. The assurances that were given and resulting trust was a key aspect for REP leaders to be confident that USD would not pull the funding plug without warning. And although the lion's share of power lay with the administration, its concerns about faithfulness to the mission statement were understandable. After all, negative publicity and a decline in fund-raising would impact them more directly than the RE's. While it is too strong to say that the university administration supported the program, clear and open communication allayed their suspicions and enabled them to dispel rumors that the REP was out to "recruit" students to be gay or repudiate Church teachings.

Caring

A third contributor to the REP's effectiveness has been its commitment to accept the university community where it was regarding LGBT issues and not push it beyond where it could comfortably go, that is, to demonstrate care for the community through the program. During the initial planning process, REP leaders reviewed the university's attitude toward inclusion of its LGBT community using the Organizational Developmental Model of Inclusion (Mitchell & Baron, 1998). Based on this instrument, USD was unsurprisingly at the stage of "Exclusion" regarding LGBT people. The REP was developed to aid the university in moving only to the next stage of "Symbolic Inclusion."

Moreover, while the REP seeks to nurture comfortable communication and dispel

homophobia, it does not require or expect RE's (or audiences) to advocate one political or theological stance over another. The REP's goal is to invite members of the campus community to examine their own attitudes and behaviors and draw conclusions for themselves, not harangue them to become activists for gay rights. Rather than assuming an adversarial or judgmental stance, RE's possess a genuine sensitivity and concern for their audiences. Friendly and earnest, RE's want to share what they know, respect divergent views, and stimulate discussion. William mentioned that audiences to whom he presented were "extremely open to discussion of these tough issues . . . even if it was just classroom politeness, it meant a great deal to me to see tolerance and know it's possible." Parker had the same experience: "I found our audiences here to be extremely attentive. I didn't personally feel that we were ever not welcome. Which was good."

Postscript

On three occasions between 1993 and 1999, USD's Board of Trustees refused to add "sexual orientation" to the university's non-discrimination policy. Perhaps in part through the REP's efforts to "queer the ethical school," in spring 2001, the trustees amended the policy as follows:

> The University prohibits discrimination against current or prospective students and employees on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected characteristic. The University does not by this non-discrimination statement disclaim any right it might otherwise have to maintain its commitment to its Catholic identity or the doctrines of the Catholic Church (USD Policy on Non-Discrimination).

This statement did not satisfy everyone. Insofar as it implicitly maintains the distinction in Catholic teaching between orientation and behavior, it seems unlikely that domestic partners (either same- or differently-sexed) will gain health insurance or other spousal benefits. However, this statement represents significant progress toward recognizing and protecting USD's LGBT community.

Parker was optimistic about USD's future:

> And the more the university takes a leadership role in that respect, and does so in a way that's compatible with the Catholic church, the more Catholic and religious institutions all over the country are going to be able to look at what happened here at USD and use that as a plan to put similar positive things in place. . . . We don't want to simply be parochial here. We have to be Catholic in the kind of lower-lower-case "c" catholic sense of being universal. So I hope that the community here is even more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, sexual orientation. And I [in the future] hope we're dialoguing more than we are now.

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